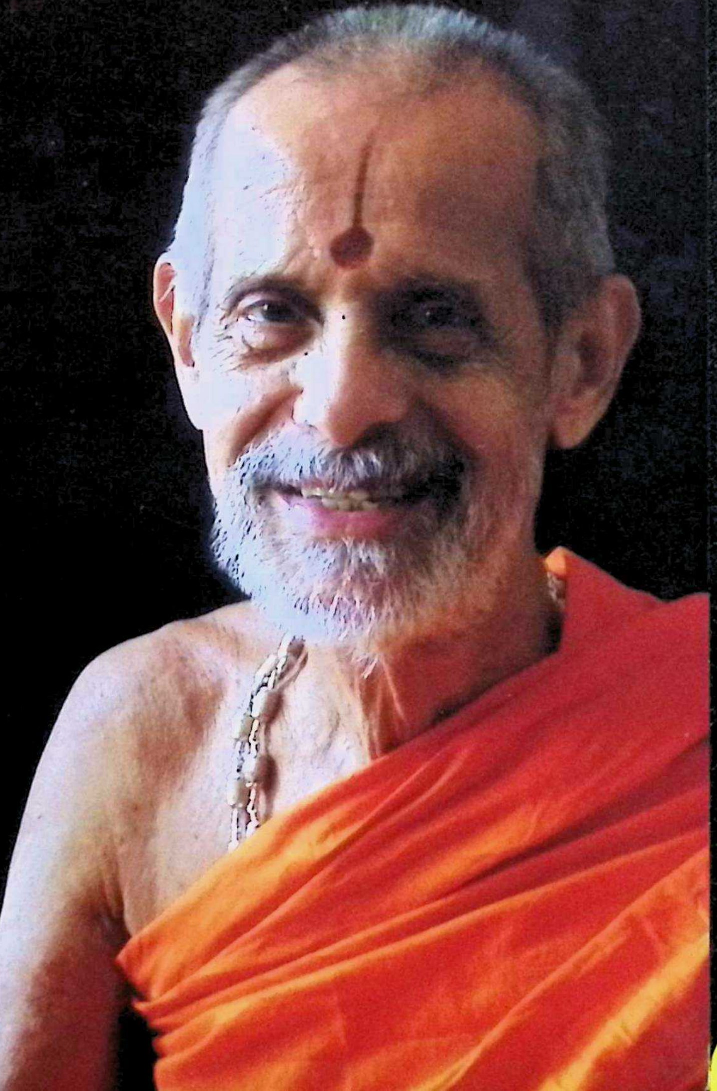
A BOOK BY DR. H. SATYANARAYANACHARYA
TRANSLATED BY PROF. VEDAVYAS M G

Hindu Saint of the Century

Sri Vishveshatirtha



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Sri Vishvesha Tirtha

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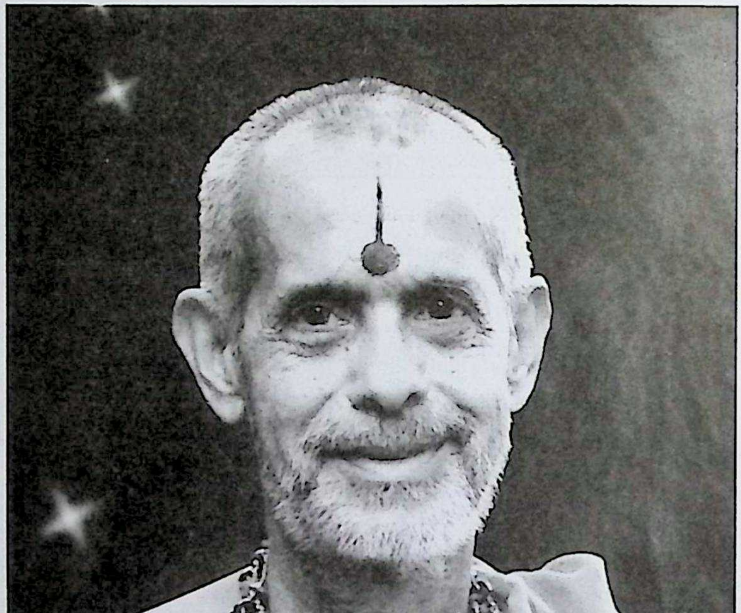

Sri Vishvesha Tirtha Sripadaru

Message by his grace
paramapujya Sri Vishvaprasanna Tirtha

A Cow's Nature

By nature, our guru was like a harmless cow. He consumed whatever hay the society offered him. If it has offered him rubbish, he has accepted that too. He has silently and without protest tolerated even the beatings he has received from society. But, in return, he has always given sweet, ambrosia-like milk; never in history milk that was dark or bitter.

Watching him work, one realises the message of lines and lines of Bhagavadgita. तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी (tulyanindāstutirmaunī) - he treated both praise and brickbats with equanimity. His only reaction to these was silence. And then सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् (santuṣṭo yena kenacit) - a ripe mind to be content with what he has. He was never the one to desire this or that for happiness. He had the mental state of a *yogi*. An immutable state of mind that said 'let anything come my way, all I wish for is the grace of God'. For one who treats service to the nation as service to God, every moment spent is the worship of God.

Every move of my *guru* was a lesson to the world. The feeling of teacher-disciple relationship in saying 'I am his disciple' is determined not merely by studying under him, but by practising the ideals shown by the teacher and by incorporating the lessons learnt into one's own life.

Foreword

Here is a feeble attempt to hold a candle to the sun. One needs a book of this size to write just a day's activities of Guru Sri Vishvesha Tirtha. That being the case, how does one capture the import of his whole life?

This is a booklet for those who know little about Sri Vishvesha Tirtha. At the same time, I dare not say it is not for those who knew him. I have given emphasis to what we can learn from the sage's life. This does not include anything about the books he has authored, discourses he has given, miracles he has performed or the debates he has won.

The present Pejavara Swamiji Sri Vishvaprasanna Tirtha has perused the book and given his message of graceful blessing. The revered Swamiji is working day and night for the upliftment of dharma, spirituality and other aspects of the society. He is managing several organisations effectively. He is a ray of hope for our future. My humble salutations to him.

It has now been a year since I authored this tiny book (in Kannada) as desired by my dear friend Sri Nagaraja Bhatta. Study of my revered teacher's life story is an inspiration to the young generation of today. For this reason, our dear Sri Vedavyas M G has translated this into the universal language of English. He is well versed in English. He has the skill to perceive the essence of the thought in Kannada and reproduce the same in his English. It is for this reason that the reader likes his work. It reads itself. I pray *hari-gurugalu* to shower their blessings on Sri Vedavyas who has translated the book purely as an expression of his *gurubhakti*.

M/s. Vagartha Printers has printed this book beautifully and in time.

I am grateful to all these people.

An author feels a sense of satisfaction only when a person reads his book. And the reader makes others read it!

Reading leads to knowledge. Getting others to read leads to *punya*.

Reading is for self improvement. Getting others to read is for society's progress.

Dr. H. Satyanarayanacharya

Translator's Note

It is not often that one comes across a soft-spoken, short-statured but towering personality like the sage Sri. Vishvesha Tirtha who was loved and respected by everyone including his detractors. When Dr. H. Satyanarayanacharya suggested that I translate his book 'ಶತಮಾನದ ಸಂತ - ಶ್ರೀ ವಿಶ್ವೇಶತೀರ್ಥರು', I considered it an opportunity to learn more about the great man. It is my ardent wish that the lessons that can be learnt by studying his life's work should reach a wider national and international audience through this translated work.

A translator's job is always a delicate one. He is always worried whether he is doing justice to the original. In the case of this book, I have been lucky that I could consult the author himself on many points. Any mistakes in translation are purely due to my oversight.

As expected, the book contains a fair number of words from Sanskrit that do not have equivalents in English. In such cases, the original Sanskrit word has been used with its meaning given within brackets. Where appropriate, italics have been used for emphasis. Writing Sanskrit words in English and getting them to pronounce correctly is achieved through the use of IAST (International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration).. A short guide for its use is provided in Appendix 2.

I am grateful to Dr. H. Satyanarayanacharya for providing me this opportunity as also for his confidence in my translation capability. I would like to thank my parents as well as my wife Pushpa for their constant support and encouragement. I will be remiss in my duty if I do not acknowledge the help of my young friend Sri Hari Ravikumar who introduced me to translation activity and guided me all the way.

I hope you will enjoy reading this book.

Vedavyas M. G.
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Hindu Saint of the Century
Śrī Viśveśa Tirtha

Prologue

A few incapable people often grumble - "I did not inherit anything from my father. Neither is my family prosperous enough. Tell me, what can I do? I am neither rich nor poor. This is my fate."

Such people have no knowledge of the truth. An achiever wishing to climb the steps of success needs neither a pedigree nor an inheritance. A destitute's son may become a millionaire. An illiterate's child may become an eloquent speaker. Did not the son of Karamchand, a common man, end up being called *Father of the Nation* and a *Mahatma*? Did not the worthy son of a door-to-door trader become the country's Prime Minister who is now building a strong and secure nation? An earthen pot cannot dry up a well; but did not *muni* Agastya, born of a pot, dry up the whole ocean?

किं जन्मना च महता पितृपौरुषेण
शक्त्या हि याति विजयी पुरुषः प्रतिष्ठाम् ।
कुम्भो न कूपमपि शोषयितुं समर्थः
कुम्भोद्भवेन मुनिनाम्बुधिरेव पीतः ।।

kiṃ janmanā ca mahatā pitṛpauruṣeṇa
śaktyā hi yāti vijayī puruṣaḥ pratiṣṭhām |
kumbho na kūpamapi śoṣayituṃ samarthaḥ
kumbhodbhavena munināmbudireva pītaḥ ||

Listen to this poet's experience:

What indeed comes from birth and inheritance?
From one's own valor and strength comes victory |

A pot is incapable of drying up even a well
But a muni, born of a pot, dried up a whole ocean ||

From the might of twin Gods Mitra and Varuna are born Agastya and Vasiṣṭha from an earthen pot. Once upon a time, the demons hid themselves in the sea. These fear mongering demons could not be overpowered by the lords of the realm. Their hoarse laughter went beyond limits. The pot-born Sage Agastya stood by to assist the gods. Standing before the sea, with its water in his cupped hands, he chanted the *svāhākāra mantra* (indicating the imbibing of water propitiating the gods). The power of his *mantra* and his *tapas* began drying up the water. The whole sea condensed into the cupped hands of Agastya. He gulped it down and emptied the sea. Lord Indra then killed the demons who were now exposed, and praised Agastya. Later this same Agastya, seeing that the Vindhya mountain was obstructing the countryside, bent it and made it lie down. He killed Vātāpi and Ilvala who used to kill pious people and became a leading light of the south part of Bharat. By making the Kaveri river flow, he provided the support system for all life.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's personality was akin to that of Sage Agastya. Like Sage Agastya, he had the stature of Vāmana and the personality of the giant Trivikrama.

Paraśurāmakṣetra (The Land of Paraśurāma)

Paraśurāma is the god who descended to earth to punish the royal lineage that started pillaging the kingdom instead of protecting it: the sixth of the ten avatars of the supreme God. At a time when the *vedajñas* (experts well versed in the vedās) and *yājñikas* (experts in conducting yajñās or sacrifices) were becoming extinct, Paraśurāma revived them and built several temples for this purpose and earned the epithet of *ācārya*. When land began being occupied by the overflowing sea, the good people appealed to Paraśurāmācārya of Bhārgava gotra. Bhārgavarāma (Paraśurāma) stood at the seafront (today's Arabian sea), performed *yajñās* and shot an arrow into the sea. Scared by the radiance of Bhārgava, Varuṇa - Lord of the seas - came ashore and bowed to him in reverence. Bhārgava then ordered Varuṇa to withdraw the seafront to the point beyond where the arrow had fallen.

The sea retreated. The western coast from Gokarna to Kanyakumari thus came into being. Thanks to Paraśurāma's radiance and splendour, this fertile land came to be called *Paraśurāmakṣetra*. When the sea retreated, the sea-living godly creatures nāga and bhūta became regional gods propitiated by the locals. The system here thrives on mutual affection and celebration. This type of system and *taulava sanskriti* (the culture of the Tulu land) is Paraśurāma's gift.

The Sahyādri section of Skandapurāṇa has named this Tulu land śūrpāraka.

Arjuna during his sojourn to the southern lands married Ulūpi, the foster daughter of Tulu land's King Alūparāja. The historical Taulava belief that she was the daughter of the serpent king Vāsuki gives credence to the nāgārādhane (celebration and prayer of snake gods) performed here.

It was Paraśurāma, the son of Jamadagni, who divided the land formed by the receding sea into 'sapta konkaṇa' (seven Konkans). Today they are famous as Karāṭa, Varāṭa, Marāṭa, Konkaṇa, Haiva, Tauḻava, Keraḻa.

Mayūravarma, the famous ruler of the Kadamba dynasty performed a great yāga like the *aśvamedhayāga* (horse sacrifice) on this *bhārgavabhūmi* (Land of Bhārgava) in Shalivahana era 200 (Third century C. E). For this, he invited sixtyfour vedic pandits from the banks of the river Godavari and granted them fertile lands to settle down. It is said that during the reign of Mayūravarma's son Chitrāngada, more than two hundred brahmin pandits were invited and given the responsibility for the administration and upkeep of temples. This topic has been mentioned in poet Lakshmisha's *Kannada Jaimini Bharata* (34th Sandhi).

Brahmins who thus settled are now known by the title of their lands like Nadillaya, Paddillaya, Todtillaya, Erkadittaya etc. Two hundred and eighty nine such brahmin families have settled in Tulu region's thirty two villages. These details are available in the work *grāmapaddhati* (Village System).

Śrī Madhvācārya, one of the three āchāryas who travelled the length and breadth of this country for reestablishing dharma, was born in this Tulu land. He grew up here. He was educated here. He walked this earth and gave the light of knowledge to the whole world. Manifesting his inner soul, he proved that he was an avatar of the god Śrī Vāyu. This Paraśurāmakṣetra is the holy land where later on, people with mystic experiences, like Vādirāja, achieved fulfilment.

This is also the land of the seven holy places - Raupyapīṭha (Udupi), Kumārādri (Kukke Subramanya), Dhvajeśvara (Koteshvara), Krodha (Shankaranarayana), Gokarṇa and Mūkāṃba (Kolluru).

Rāmakunja

Udupi is a holy town on a seashore where the supreme being of the three worlds, Lord Krishna came down in answer to Saint Madhva. Rāmakunja village is located about eighty miles east-northeast of here on the Uppinangady-Subramanya road. Rāmakunjeśvara temple is present here.

This is a Hariharakṣetra - a unique place where both Vishnu (Hari) and Shiva (Hara) stood as one - Shiva who taught Rāma-mantra to his consort and praises its greatness; and Srirāma (an avatar of Vishnu) who installed the Shivalinga at Rameshwaram and declared his greatness. It is named Rāmakunja as it is the confluence of Lord Rama and Lord Kunjeshvara. This is the birthplace of Śrī Pejāvara Swamiji.

A son was born to the couple Kamalamma and Narayanacharya Paddillaya of the Eratadi house on the *vaishakha shuddha dashami* (10th day of the first half of the Vaishakha month) of the year *Prajotpatti* (Fifth year of the 60-year cycle of the Hindu calendar) in the year A. D. 1931.

There is a practice that says 'paitāmahaṃ nāma kuryat' (One should take the grandfather's name). It is appropriate to name the grandson after the grandfather(s). The boy's paternal grandfather was **Venkata**ramana Paddillaya and the maternal grandfather was **Rama**krishna Bhatta. The two names were joined and the boy was named Venkatarama.

Young Venkatarama

Venkatarama was a mischievous three-year-old. Along with sisters Lakshmi and Vasanthi and brothers Madhva and Raghurama, the boy turned the house into a stage for playing Yakshagana. Before he could even pronounce *kabaddi* (an outdoor game), he would play the game calling it *du-du-du* in his babytalk.

It was one of those bright hot afternoons. Venkatarama fell into the garden lake while playing with his elder sister. Seeing her dear brother fall into the pond, sister Lakshmakka started crying out for her father. Hearing the loud outcry, the garden assistant Choma came running. He could swim, but what to do, he was a dalit (an untouchable). He was not supposed to touch a brahmin boy. He called out to the boy's father who was in the midst of his afternoon *puja*. The father hurried to the pond, pulled him out and saved the boy from drowning. The danger was averted. This was an unforgettable episode for the boy.

That evening when his father was not around, the boy went to Choma and enquired "why should you not touch me?". Choma couldn't think of a suitable answer. "It is a traditional practice," he said. Venkatarama said "In that case, I will touch you", and so saying ran towards Choma. Choma ran away, out of reach.

Venkatarama commenced attending Rāmakunja school. Watching the dalit students sitting separately, his heart would go out to them. "They are good people too. Aren't they just like us?", "Why should they not play with us?" - he used to ask such questions to his seniors. Nobody would answer him. They would only say "You should not ask such questions". The boy would go and touch the dalits himself. He would invite them to play with him. Those children were reluctant at first, but his love for them made them join him in the games.

On his way home, he would take a dip in the garden lake, swim around, clean his clothes and make sure that there would be no hindrance to the sanctified puja at home. He would thus keep his parents happy.

It was a time when untouchability was widespread in villages. Even at that time, the young Venkatarama rebelled against untouchability. He resolved to fight against it.

He could not understand something. 'Suleiman, Isubu, Lewis would all come home now and then. They would come straight into the main hall and sit there. None of them believed in our Ramakunjeshwara. But Chinkra, Odi, Choma - all these people pray to our own Lord Rāma and Lord Krishna; they attend the same village fair and partake in the *bhootakola* (a traditional village dance invoking the spirits, popular in the coastal districts). They join in *bhajans* too, but they are not allowed to enter the home. What kind of contradiction is this? A bigger contradiction was - if the same dalits get converted to another religion and change their names, then they are no longer untouchable. Wow! Is it possible that it says so in the *dharma shastras* written by the great *rishis*? No, no, impossible. This is a meaningless practice. This is a false practice. People who believe in Ramakunjeshwara should continue to be part of us. This was the boy's thought process.

Brahmopadesha at Eight; *Praṇavopadeśa* at Nine

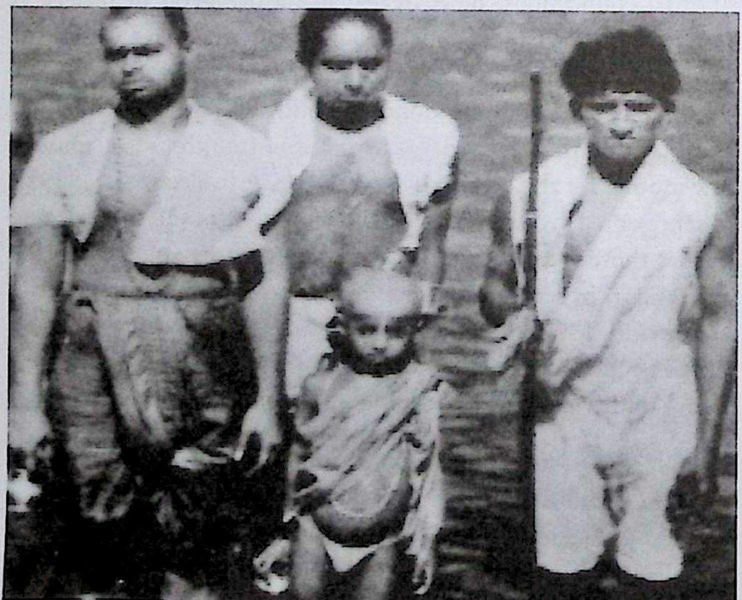
Brahmopadesha or *Upanayana* is like a second birth. *Sanyāsa* is akin to a third birth.

As man gets rid of materialistic bonds and makes higher level spiritual connections, he is treated like a demi-god in society. A society does not benefit much from a man who stays within the framework of father-mother, brother-sister etc,. The *samskara* of getting rid of the strong bonds of birth and strengthening the bonds with gurus and vedas is *upanayana* (the thread ceremony). The mother for this second birth is *vedamāte* (collective knowledge as represented by the vedas). And the father is the teacher who teaches those vedas. From that day, the *vaṭu* (the young boy after *upanayana*, in search of knowledge) sees a guru in his father and a gayatri in his mother. The days of being fed by the mother are over. The saying 'matṛ devo bhava' (mother is a god) and 'pitṛ devo bhava' (father is a god) become literally true.

Sanyāsa is at a higher plane than *upanayana*. A *sanyāsi* gives up all materialistic things he has inherited. He even gets rid of his clothes and wears only the *kāvi* (a saffron coloured single piece of cloth denoting a life of spirituality and pursuit of brahman), a piece of cloth given by his guru and holds the *daṇḍa* (a wooden staff - like a sceptre). This *danḍa* is not a wooden stick used for scaring cats and dogs. It symbolises a club that scares away lust, anger, greed, desire, ego and jealousy. It is a *mantradanḍa* (a sacred club) that scares away these six enemies of the soul.

On *upanayana*, the birth name does not change - only the suffix 'Sharma' gets added to denote initiation into the pursuit of knowledge. Not so for *sanyāsa*. The name itself changes after *praṇavopadeśa* (the event initiating a person to become a *yati* or a pontiff). One who was well known as the boy Venkatarama will henceforth be known as 'Viśveśa Tīrtha' to the world.

The then head of the Pejāvara maṭha Śrī Vishvamānya Tīrtha anointed the boy as Viśveśa Tīrtha and gave him the *deeksha* (the act of initiating into spiritual life and naming him a successor, to succeed at a later date) through *praṇavopadeśa*.



A 'yati' at nine

Pejāvara Maṭha

Maṭha is a Sanskrit word (मठ). Amarasimha, the ancient lexicographer says maṭhaścātrādinilayaḥ - a maṭha is a teachers' abode filled with students. Its root form, 'maṭha-nivāsādhyānayoḥ', clearly indicates a place that is the home of spiritual bliss.

'One should never enter a maṭha empty-handed' - this has been a time immemorial practice in Indian culture. The thinking behind this practise is simple. A maṭha is a serene place that works toward the good of the society by feeding and educating citizens with no income of its own. It is the society's responsibility to support and develop the maṭha.

Society is cleansed by the maṭha and its pontiffs. In return, society fosters the maṭha. The seers are akin to the fish in the lake of water called society. Fish are needed to keep the water clean; and water is essential for the fish to live.

An organisation can achieve what an individual can not. Maṭhas have been built by visionary acharyas with the primary aim of protecting *sanatana dharma* and propagating spiritual knowledge. Acharya Shankara, born in Kerala, established 'chaturnamayapeethas' or the four regional maṭhas in the four corners of India. Śrī Rāmānuja, born in Tamilnadu, made Melukote in Karnataka his centre of activity and established several maṭhas. Later, during the early thirteenth century, Śrī Madhvācārya incarnated himself as a human in Tulunadu in Karnataka and gave *sanyāsa* to several disciples.

Śrī Madhvācārya came on foot to Kukke Subramanya. The inception of Subramanya maṭha took place here. Later he visited Rāmakunja too. He made arrangements for regular puja and festivals at Paranti temple. With his *tapobala* (supernatural power coming from *tapas*), he caused rain to fill dried up lakes with water. He established the Erkimaṭha. A few mischief mongers, misled by some fraudsters, obstructed him and tried to beat him up at Nerenki near Rāmakunja. But humbled by his radiance and lustre, they fell at his feet, sought his pardon and ended up becoming his followers. Thus, Śrī Madhvācārya's connection with Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's birthplace is eight hundred years old.

After the installation of Krishna's idol, eight maṭhas were established at Udupi with the main Krishna maṭha at the centre. Palimāru maṭha is the first among them and Pejāvara maṭha, the last.

Śrī Madhvācārya gifted the idols of Rāma, Krishna, Varāha and Narasiṃha to the eight *yatis* (pontiffs) making them responsible for propagating dharma and *tatvavāda* (general principles leading to discovering the Supreme). These eight *yatis* have the authority to conduct puja of Lord Krishna, the sustainer of the universe and provider of food, resplendent with his eight consorts (*ashta mahishi*). These eight maṭhas are grouped into four pairs. Each pair is a *dvandva maṭha* of its paired maṭha.

A legend about the maṭhas can be narrated here. Śrī Madhvācārya was once camping at Kanva Tīrtha along the shores of the sea. There was a large banyan tree, with steps leading down to the tree from all four directions. Teacher Madhva after consecrating these eight disciples under the tree, directed them to walk down the steps in pairs. It is said that each pair was declared dvandva maṭhas. Based on the order in which they walked down, Palimaru maṭha was identified as the first.

Maṭha	**First Disciple**	**Presiding Deity**	**Dvandva maṭha**
Palimaru	Śrī Hrishikesha Tīrtha	Lord Śrī Rāma	Adamaru
Adamaru	Śrī Narahari Tīrtha	Chaturbhuja Kaliyamardana Krishna	Palimaru
Krishnapura	Śrī Janardana Tīrtha	Dvibhuja Kaliyamardana Krishna	Puttige
Puttige	Śrī Upendra Tīrtha	Lord Vittala	Krishnapura
Shiruru	Śrī Vamana Tīrtha	Lord Vittala	Sode
Sode	Śrī Vishnu Tīrtha	Lord Bhuvaraha	Shiruru
Kaniyuru	Śrī Rāma Tīrtha	Lord Narasimha	Pejāvara
Pejāvara	Śrī Adhokshaja Tīrtha	Lord Vittala	Kaniyuru

Pejāvara maṭha is not a wealthy maṭha. There was a time when loans had to be raised to maintain its staff. It was at such a time, Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha took responsibility for its administration even while he was studying the *shastras*. He was struggling to understand the deeper meaning of the *shastras* and the scriptures. Fortunately for him, he came across *guru* Vidyāmānya, in the same manner that Dhruva came across Narada. God helps those who help themselves. This is what *tittibha-nyaya* is all about. One should not despair and say 'not possible'. One should push forward and try one's best.

Ṭiṭṭibha Nyāya

There is an interesting story of *ṭiṭṭibha nyāya* (justice of the Lapwing bird) that illustrates the adage 'God helps those who help themselves'. There lived on a small plant near a seafront, a family of lapwings - birds that belong to the same family as the sparrows. They were happy coo-ing *'thi thi'* (from which the word *ṭiṭṭibha* is derived). One day, a female lapwing laid its first egg. On that very day, the high tide of the sea washed away the egg. The female bird was desolate. After the passage of some time, it laid a second egg. That too was gobbled up by the giant waves of the sea king. Both the female bird and the male bird were angry. 'If the sea does this again, *we should dry up the sea*,' decided the bird couple. The same thing repeated the next time it laid the egg. Both the birds were now determined and started work on their plan.

Both the birds collected mouthfuls of water, flew to a far away desert and spat the water out. The sun was now directly overhead, but their work continued. The sun started setting in the west. But the lapwing couple had not suspended their work. There would be no respite until the eggs were found.

Narada, the world traveller, noticed this. The couple's brave stand and unabated work made him happy. He informed Garuda, the Lord of the birds, of the injustice done to these feeble beings. Garuda could not bear the helplessness of his ilk. He flew over the sea and flapped his enormous wings forcefully. The sea billowed vigorously. The sea became dull and surrendered to the king of birds. He handed the three eggs on a golden platter to the lapwings. The lapwing couple heaved a sigh of relief and lived happily.

For those who unhesitatingly work without losing hope, nothing is impossible. They will receive the support of great souls - like the lapwings received from Garuda; like Dhruva received from Narada.

The *granthas* (philosophical works) of Śrī Madhvācārya composed for the spiritual upliftment of people are as vast as the sea. Everyone sees the surface of the sea. But few can get to the depth where they can find pearls and gems. Viśveśa Tīrtha was in need of a capable guide who could help him reach the depths of Madhvācārya's philosophical works.

With his Guru Sri Vidyamanya Tirtha

“Come, I will guide you. As you understand more and more, I will also speed up my guidance” - these earnest and affectionate words uttered in a dignified manner attracted Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha. Śrī Vidyāmānya Tīrtha, a treasure trove of tapas and scholarship and the pontiff of Bhandarakeri maṭha initiated the śāntipāṭha to Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha.

Vidyāmānya the teacher, taught the lessons; the student Viśveśa Tīrtha understood and recanted them. Listening to his disciple’s recantation was a feast for the teacher’s ears. Apart from what was taught, Viśveśa Tīrtha would add his own extensions based on his talent and offer them to the teacher.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ।।

yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ

Obedience is the hallmark of a student. He should show utmost devotion and dedication to the teacher. He should be devoted to the shastras being studied and their deity. It is then that he learns not only what is taught by the teacher, but also additional information that is not taught. Śrī Vidyāmānya used to be joyous seeing his protege being a living example of Madhvācārya's words above.

The study of treatises has presently begun. Śrī Jayathīrtha and Śrī Vyāsarāja are stalwarts who wrote unparalleled treatises in the field of philosophy. There has not been a work of comparable scholarship to their works - Nyāyāmṛta, Tātparya Candrike and śrīmanyāyasudhe. These treatises contain comparative and critical studies of all schools of philosophical thought. Teaching them led to a virtuous debate based on a series of questions and answers between the teacher and the taught. It is said that just as fire is produced from a sacred spark (specifically from *sami*), the discussion between the teacher and the disciple leads to a blaze of knowledge. As Chanakya says

यथा खनन् खनित्रेण नरो वार्यधिगच्छति ।
तथा गुरुगतां विद्यां शुश्रुषुरधिगच्छति ।।

*yathā khanan khanitreṇa naro vāryadhigacchati *
*tathā gurugatāṃ vidyāṃ śuśrūṣuradhigacchati *

Water is present underground. A person who uses a crow-bar and a pick-axe can extract water that is already present. In the same manner, knowledge is already present in a *guru*. It is the job of the *shishya* (student) to extract that knowledge. An answer obtained by questioning has to be discussed again and again. Until a consensus is reached, this noble friction cannot cease. A capable student makes the teacher realise deeper meanings and philosophies.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's study of the great grantha *Nyāyasudhā* had just concluded. The valedictory function was held in Udupi.

During the function, for over two hours, the disciple Viśveśa placed before the audience all that he had learnt. The guru Vidyāmānya then declared "Viśveśa Tīrtha learnt just a little bit from me. He has learnt a hundred times of that due to the blessings of *vayudevaru*. I have found him the same way as Achyutapreksha (Madhvācārya's mentor) found Purnaprajna (an epithet for Madhvācārya)."

A layman becomes a capable man through education. One who has spent his childhood pursuing education becomes a guiding light for the community. He becomes a radiant North Star. We may not be able to reach the North Star, but if it is guiding us, we will not lose our way. The sea men used to set their sights on the North Star to guide them in the direction of the shore. Due to the power of his scholarship, the strength of his prayers, the inspiration of his wisdom and concern for the well being of the society, the twenty-three year old Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha has risen like a Northstar for the society.

In *Kaliyuga*, Unity is Strength

Thanks to the unity of people, our country had just been liberated. The tree of dharma had begun drying up due to the blindness towards dharma of the alien rulers. Its branches had been felled. Its roots were being poisoned. The burden of protecting the *sanatana dharma* and our culture, and re-sprout them with the fragrance of fresh flowers was taken up by the country's *dharma peethas*. Pejāvara Śrī also toiled day and night for this cause.

While other religious denominations have their own country to call home, Bhārata is the only country for *sanatana Hindu dharma*. This is the country that got its name from the dharmic rule of Bharata, the son of Rishabhadeva. This is the country that became prosperous during the fourteen years of rule of Bharata, the brother of Rāma. Our country Bhārata has been known as a safe and strong country due to King Dushyantha's son, emperor Bharata. This mother India has derived her name from such great sons of hers. The most valuable wealth of this country is its culture, Sanskrit and dharma. Organisations are needed to protect them. During this *Kaliyuga*, when dharma is deteriorating due to the mischiefs of foreigners and Indians influenced by them, organisation is strength. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha provided leadership to several such organisations. One of them is Akhila Bhārata Mādhva Mahāmaṃḍala.

Karnataka alone used to have twenty-one Mādhva dharma peethas. Mādhva philosophy has been one of the foremost schools of thought. Among the three world-renowned schools of philosophical thought, the Mādhva philosophy, based on the theory of Bhakti, has been grounded in scientific thought. In spite of this, this school of thought had not received the accolade or the popularity it deserved. The reason - each Mādhva maṭha had become a separate sect resulting in paucity of a unified front among the Mādhvas. The lack of broad-minded leaders at that time who could respect the good in other sects and bring them all together had resulted in dimming the light of Mādhva philosophy. The extent of its ill effect can be gauged by the fact there was a call from some corners of the state for dropping Śrī Madhvācārya's name from the state anthem. Even a few well meaning pandits had started labelling Mādhva philosophy as an intolerant one that divides people.

This caused agony for Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha who had understood the breadth and depth of the Mādhva philosophy and was breathing its principles day in and day out. His stand was that if someone is speaking ill about us, there must be some defect in us. He grasped the fact that if there is dissonance in spite of the system being virtuous, then there must be some defects in the followers. He resolved to 'bring the house to order first, then the town'. He began contemplating bringing all maṭhas into one organisation and making them socially relevant.

Under the circumstances of those days, this looked like an impossible task. The feeling that their own maṭha alone was right was deep rooted among the devotees. It was no easy task to bring them into a unified mindset. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha sought the blessings and cooperation of Śrī Vidyāmānya Tīrtha, prayed to the gods Krishna and Mukhyaprana of Udupi to clear the obstructions for success, and jumped headlong into the task of organising.

Śrī Pejāvara Swamiji was himself a sarvajña pīṭhādhipati (occupier of the highest seat of the mādhva community), an incomparable scholar and a virtuous man. In spite of this, he kept aside pride and position that are natural for a pīṭhādhipati, and with the noble intention of unifying the society, took to the streets. He travelled around the country and went from house to house. He begged Swamijis with his outstretched śāṭi (long saffron upper garment worn by seers). He had words of comfort for the families. He endured insults and tolerated swear words. He faced wrath and anger; and listened patiently to snide remarks, just as the mother earth tolerates her children's onslaughts; in the same manner as a sacred fire digests everything thrown at it; just like the never-tiring wind that traverses the world; just like the sacred cow that eats grass but gives milk.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's maiden paryāya was in 1953. Tens of thousands had gathered in Udupi for this event. It was a festive ambience all around. The extraordinary news that as many as twenty three heads of maṭhas are to gather in the *rājāngaṇa* (the large hall at Udupi, the venue of all important events of the Krishna maṭha) had brought them to the town.

A Gundacharya said "Will the maṭha heads really come? Our Swamiji is under some illusion. Getting them all together is like tying up wind in a piece of cloth."

An Aithal said "Why do you say so? Twenty of them are already here. Arrangements have been made at Pajaka for four. One is at Kumbhasi. Two are already at Muchchalagodu temple conducting *samsthana puje*. One is at Herga Subraya's home. One is at our Sanskrit College. *Samsthana puje* is being conducted at all the eight maṭhas. All of them will arrive on time to the assembly. Pejāvara Swamiji did not sleep at all through the night. He was himself in the forefront of overseeing arrangements for their welcome, stay and food arrangements."

Pejāvara Swamiji's smile, reflective of his blemishless thought, his logical and effective reasoning, the way he voluntarily approached, persuaded and invited them, the manner in which he convinced them about the need to become united, and his sheer love, radiance and brilliance had brought together twenty three Swamijis to Udupi that day. Tears of joy welled up among the people of Udupi. The Akhila Bhārata Mādhva Mahāmanḍala was established on that day in the presence and heartful support of twenty three seers of different Mādhva maṭhas at Rajatapeethapura (another name for Udupi) where Śrī Madhvācārya achieved his life's goal. The organisation was established as the representative body of all Mādhvas and a ray of hope for the believers.

Speaking on the occasion, Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha said "A brahmin who does not follow noble practices like sandhyāvandana ('salutation to (Goddess) Sandhyā' or 'salutation during the time of Sandhyā', is a mandatory religious ritual supposed to be performed daily, traditionally, by Dvija communities of Hindus) or Ekadashi (the day of fasting spent in contemplation and prayer) is like a light bulb devoid of current. A brahmin with ignoble practices is akin to a fused bulb. The brahmin youth should not end up like light bulbs without current. Suitable arrangements should be made for eating hygienic food and for performing rituals for students shifting to far away towns for education. For this purpose, student hostels should be established where opportunities exist for higher education. These should be called 'Mādhva Hostels' under the banner and control of the Mandala without being identified with any particular maṭha. And arrangements should be made so that all practices of the maṭha can be diligently followed by the students."

Within a few years, the Mādhva Mandala was successful to an extent where the initial doubters were won over. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's creative strengths were unveiled. Attracted by the selfless service and efficiency of the Mandala which had received the full support and concurrence of the seers, the people of the sect ignored the differences between their maṭhas and came together in a spirit of friendship like the saying 'bāndhavāḥ viśṇubhaktāśca' (all devotees of Vishnu are one family) and stood united to realise the aims of Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha.

A Herculean Task

In this unification, Viśveśa Tīrtha's efforts were akin to the efforts of the ancient sage Bhagīratha (who brought the river Ganga down to earth from the heavens for the benefit of people) according to the veterans who have been witness to it. Once it is resolved that 'in this task lies the benefit to society', there should be no stepping back from the task. One should not be swayed by the obstacles that may come along the way. One should trust the Supreme and carry on unfazed. You should hurt no one's feelings. It is then that the obstructions do not become hindrances to the work at hand. Instead they become stepping stones to success. You can rest only after the work is completed. As the Sanskrit poet Bhartṛhari says

प्रारभ्यते न खलु विघ्नभयेन नीचैः
  प्रारभ्य विघ्ननिहता विरमन्ति मध्याः ।
विघ्नैः पुनः पुनरपि प्रतिहन्यमानाः
  प्रारब्धमुत्तमजना न परित्यजन्ति ।।

prārabhyate na khalu vighnabhayena nīcaiḥ
prārabhya vighnanihatā viramanti madhyāḥ |
vighnaiḥ punaḥ punarapi pratihanyamānāḥ
prārabdhamuttamajanā na parityajanti ||

Summary - There are three types of people - the *neecha* or a person with base (or ignoble) character, the *madhyama* or a person who is of moderate character or one who takes the middle road, and *uttama* or a person who is of noble character. Some people know that the work at hand benefits self as well as others, but still do not commence the good work. Such people belong to the *neecha* group. *Madhyama* people are skilled beginners. At the first whiff of trouble they give up. But the *uttamas* are unlike either. Even though they may face obstacles at every step, they do not step back from their goal - like sage Bhagīratha who brought Ganga down to earth. It would not be surprising if Viśveśa Tīrtha's work brings to mind the sage Bhagīratha.

It was as if Swamiji had wheels attached to his legs. Mādhva hostels were established in eight towns in Karnataka. Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha was started at Bangalore. The 'Tatvavāda' periodical for propagating philosophical thoughts was started in not one but three languages and has substantially achieved its objective.

In every village and town he started spiritual camps, knowledge seminars, scholarly debates, philosophical seminars, publication of books and translation of Sanskrit works into Kannada. In this manner Acharya Madhva's message could reach every home. Mādhva students who had enrolled at regular institutions were encouraged to find interest in the Mādhva school of thought by providing them with financial assistance.

In major pilgrim centres, arrangements for accommodation and food were made for travellers from other cities. From Kanyakumari to Badrinath, from Puri Jagannath to Nashik, pilgrim centres were equipped with prayer halls, bathing ghat, accommodation etc.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha aspired for great things, but did not hurry them up unnecessarily. He used to spend at least four to five hours in deep study, two to three hours in puja, and five to six hours in sleep. But for this, he would spend all the rest of his time in public service, organising, seeking donations etc. He never wasted a moment of his precious life.

The mystic advises - 'Future is shaped today. Forget yesterday's worry. Do not get excited about tomorrow's dreams. Keeping aside the past and the future, be in the present, think of the specific tasks to be completed and work toward it peacefully. Focus on completing the work at hand in the most effective way possible'. That decides your future.

गतं न चिन्तयेत् प्राज्ञो भविष्यं नैव चिन्तयेत् ।
वर्तमानेषु कालेषु वर्तन्ते हि विचक्षणाः ।।

gataṃ na cintayet prājño bhaviṣyaṃ naiva cintayet |
vartamāneṣu kāleṣu vartante hi vicakṣaṇāḥ ||

A *haridāsa* (Servant of Lord Hari - Vaishnavaite followers of Madhva who composed songs in Kannada bringing spirituality and philosophy to common people) has said 'Today is a great day, it may not be so tomorrow' while a Kannada poet has sung 'Yesterday is dead, tomorrow may never arrive; why cry over them and ignore the lovely today?'. Our elders have often said 'take care of today and it will take care of you tomorrow.'

If we engage in virtuous activities now, it will turn into sweet memories for tomorrow's delight. We do not have the future in our grasp now. Only the present is. We have to make proper use of it by all means possible. It does not mean of course that planning about the future is unnecessary. In a nutshell, it tells us not to build castles in the air dreaming about tomorrows and waste precious todays.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha had studied and understood history. He would analyse past events, recognise their appropriateness or otherwise, identify their defects and weaknesses, and then plan for the future. He would plan for projects to be completed over the following four to five years. No initiative is successful without proper planning. Sir M. Visvesvaraya showed the path to prosperity through planning. The progress achieved by Japan is said to be attributable to the planned projects taken up by that country. Planning for the future is needed. However, for it to be successful, the present should be fully utilised. This is Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's life message.

Poornaprajna Vidyapeeta

Among Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's achievements, the crowning glory is the establishment of Poornaprajna Vidyapeeta.

A statement recorded in connection with the need to establish the Vidyapeeta is as follows - "In today's mechanised world, people's devotion to the Supreme is collapsing. Due to the cultural influence of the west, the common people are abhorring our vedic culture. The study of English is leading to disinterest in Sanskrit. The scholars of the earlier generation are gradually passing away. Opportunities for new learning are also coming down. This being the case, in another twenty years or so, the number of vedic scholars will be only a drop in the ocean."

"This Vidyapeeta's mission is to fill a significant shortage in today's society by developing great scholars, who in order to save our ancient philosophy and knowledge systems, can study them comprehensively, understand every segment, speak about them, analyse and compare them with western systems and propoud its specialities."

In the Vidyapeeta that commenced with twelve students and two teachers, more than forty teachers are today teaching more than three hundred students.

In order to sustain the Vidyapeeta during its early days, our Swamiji went with a begging bowl from house to house. Every brick of the building is a witness to the Swamiji's effort. Every alphabet taught here has the Swamiji's stamp.

The Swamiji was everything to the students here - a mother who loves, a father who feeds, a teacher who teaches, and a relative who shelters.

The 'guru' giving a bath to his 'children' during Deepavali.

Students who studied here are spread around the world today in the service of society. Many have become pontiffs of maṭha. Several are propagating knowledge as vice-chancellors, directors, orators and priests.

This Vidyapeeta is the Swamiji's *karmakshetra* - the karmic field of his life; his most favourite home and a symbol of his achievement. Hence he lives here, in his *vrindavana* (place of cremation of a pontiff, more specifically the structure over it worshipped by the devotees), even after his time.

Secret to the Organisation's Success

No organisation can grow to be a great one overnight. A clear goal, a proper path, an unabated enthusiasm, efficiency, ability to shower affection on everything and everybody, a profound desire to see our brethren grow higher than us, propriety, nicety, enormous patience - all these are essential for development. A mother with such leadership qualities makes the home an institution.

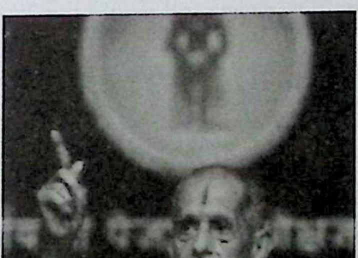
Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's leadership was of this motherly kind. Vidyapeeta, the institution, is a family. More than rules and regulations, it is the pull of love and affection that is the regulating force. If an event takes place here that is against one's liking, there is no punishment for that individual or group. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha, the head of the institution, just goes on a fast. When he does this, the institution shudders. The culprit starts introspecting. This results in creating an environment or a motivation so that no other person will ever make such a mistake again.

If a culprit is punished, only he is reformed. It is also possible it may lead the culprit to commit mistakes under cover or he may become cynical and make more mistakes. But the emotional punishment giving opportunity for introspection and change of heart of the culprit teaches not just one person, but a whole institution. It motivates everyone not to repeat such mistakes.

Once the transgressor regrets his action, has a change of heart and approaches the Swamiji, his anger would vanish - 'Praṇāmāntaṃ satāṃ kopaḥ'. He would then show a flood of affection to the wrong-doer. This is not the method of a doctor who pierces a needle to inject the medicine. It is the way of a mother who concocts a medicine sweetened with jaggery and honey, and protects the health of the child by rubbing oil to his head.

A Mother's Method

There are three ways to correct a transgression - 'prabhusaṃmita', 'mitrasaṃmita', and 'kāntāsaṃmita'. 'You have to behave in this particular way, else you will be punished thus' - this is prabhusaṃmita (by the lord's order, *prabhu* meaning lord). The śruti, smṛti are considered prabhusaṃmita. Puranas are treated as mitrasaṃmita as they give illustrations as a friend (*mitra*) would and provide suggestions and advice. The method of one who rules his heart (*kāntā*) is to get close to her lover and talk to him lovingly without openly advising him, but altering him to her desire. This is kāntāsaṃmita. Great epics like the Rāmāyaṇa are kāntāsaṃmitas. Has Vālmīki ever specified 'you should be like Rāma and not Rāvaṇa? But haven't Vālmīki's kāntāsaṃmita words merged into tradition and transformed hearts in line with the quotation 'rāmādivat pravartitavyaṃ, na rāvaṇādivat' (transform to become a Rāma, not a Ravana) This kāntāsaṃmita is like psychological therapy. Śrī Vidyāmānya Tīrtha, the mentor of Pejāvara Swamiji used to say that the latter's lectures were akin to kāntāsaṃmita and would add, "but ours is not so, it is like prabhusaṃmita".


Sri Vishvesha Tirtha during a lecture

People who have watched Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's skill in running institutions add a fourth one called mātṛsaṃmita in addition to the three mentioned above. To the world, Swamiji is a frontline leader of the Hindu dharma. In the eyes of India's citizens he is a nation builder and a well wisher of the society at large. Brahmins view him as the pontiff of a maṭha. According to the Mādhvas, he is a scholar *nonpareil,* a philosopher who ushered in reforms without surrendering to superstitious tradition. In the eyes of workers and students of the institutions he established, he was an embodiment of pure motherhood. His mentorship was like mātṛsaṃmita.

Even obedient children often grumble about a father's words. But that is not so with a mother. A father's words are rooted in intellect, while the mother's are from the heart, with compassion. Her words are filled with examples and proverbs, and sometimes even with tears.

A disciple once asked the Swamiji - "Many pontiffs have travelled to the US for propagation of dharma. Should you also not do the same and become a world guru?".

First, a smile indicating he understood the question well. And then an immediate response. "To become a world guru it is not necessary for me to go abroad. The bow can be here (in India). Only the arrow has to cross the seas."

One sentence - filled with tens of thoughts. This was Swamiji's charming manner of speaking. His words were liked by the traditionalists and would put intellectual leftists in a dilemma.

Lord Rāma's Priest

Śrī Madhvācārya gifted his disciple Śrī Adhokshaja Tīrtha an idol of Vittala for propitiating. Vittala is Krishna with his hands on his waist. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha who is of the same lineage as Śrī Adhokshaja, has placed the Vittala idol on the 'paṭṭada pīṭha' (the highest official seat of the pontiff) and performs puja. This Vittala is known as Ajaviṭhala. In order to distinguish this Vittala from those of Shiroor maṭha and Puttige maṭha, the first and last syllables of **A**dhoksha**ja**, the first pontiff, have been joined to get the prefix *aja*. The name 'Ajaviṭhala' has been inscribed on all the age-old vessels of Pejāvara maṭha. All these are the property of Ajaviṭhala.

None of them belong to the pontiff. He is only a trustee. In the words of Swamiji, "we are only trustees, not thirsty".

Another specialty of Pejāvara maṭha is that along with Ajaviṭhala, puja is performed with equal importance to Lord Śrī Rāma accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana. 'Maryādāpuruṣottama' (an epithet for Lord Rāma meaning 'most honourable among men') Śrī Rāma and 'rājakāraṇapariṇata' (an epithet for Lord Krishna meaning 'extremely skilled in the art of politics') Śrī Krishna are thus both propitiated here. It is for this reason he named the trust established for public service as 'Rāmavittala Trust'. Many organisations started by the Swamiji work under this banner.

The Śrī Rāma idol mentioned above also has an extraordinary story rooted in faith. Sage Kaṇva is supposed to have personally performed *puja* for this idol. Kanvathirtha on the shores of the western sea is a well known pilgrim centre. It is where sage Kaṇva conducted his *tapas*. In Tantya maṭha here lay the idol of Śrī Rāma accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, that were worshipped by ṛṣi Kaṇva. Later the immortal Vibhīṣhaṇa also worshipped these idols. Even Śrī Madhvācārya who spent his 'cāturmāsya' (the period of four months in a year dedicated for special puja accompanied by severe diet and travel restrictions followed by many Hindus) here in the late thirteenth century worshipped these idols.

Among the lineage of Pejāvara maṭha pontiffs is the well known *tapasvin* Śrī Vijayadhvaja Tīrtha. Sitting under a banyan tree at Kanvatirtha, he contributed by writing the Sanskrit treatise for the complete śrīmadbhāgavata purāṇa. A divine saint who perceived Lord Rāma by his nearness to anjanāsūnu (the son of Anjana i.e., Anjaneya). During his time, this idol of Lord Rāma, earlier worshipped by Kaṇva-Vibhīṣhaṇa-Madhvā, came to be part of Pejāvara maṭha ancestry.

Deeply engrossed in the worship of Rama and Krishna

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha gets deeply engrossed and emotional while worshipping Śrī Rāma and Śrī Krishna. Like Hanumān, he has imbibed the peaceful and lovely ideals of Rāma. He has assimilated Krishna's equanimity, sagacity and leadership in upholding dharma. The audience would be thrilled listening to his discourses on Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Bhagavata, and with tears of joy in their eyes, they would be transported to Ramarajya itself, in a manner of speaking. Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata are like the two eyes for a Hindu. They are the country's cultural ambassadors. In these tales, by living and walking on this land, Rāma and Krishna made this a Rāmakshetra, and by their conduct and speech, became historical, ideal heroes. Even though Krishna's original abode (Brindavan in Mathura) has been ruined due to repeated attacks, the daily puja has not ceased. This same Krishna is worshipped in Udupi. However, if one goes to visit Rāma at Ayodhya, he has been locked up and entry is denied. Our own government has locked up our Rāma. No matter how unyielding things were during alien rule, Pejāvara Swamiji felt it was not right that even after independence, no attention was being given to the feelings of the peace-loving majoritarian general public and precious time was being squandered away.

Everyday, at least one organisation connected with the rejuvenation of Rāma temple used to meet the Swamiji, and lament the poor state of Ayodhya's Rāmamandira.

The Swamiji often used to express his disgust that the symbol of the country's culture and pride, Ayodhya, was being misused for political benefit and that political games were being played in the name of Lord Rāma.

Lord Rāma at Ayodhya, with his dazzling splendour, caught the eye of every loot-thirsty invader of India. The grand Rammandir at Ayodhya has fallen many times in the past. It has risen again every time. Among the seven *dharmadhvajas* (flags proclaiming and symbolising dharma) of Aryavarta and Brahmavarta, the one on the Rāma temple at Ayodhya is pre-eminent. One of the firmly rooted beliefs of this country's culture is that the soul is liberated and salvation attained once a person travels through Ayodhya, on the banks of the river Sarayu, in addition to the other six centres of dharma namely - Mathura, Mayapuree (Haridwar), Kashi (Vishwanath), Kanchi (a Shakti centre), Ujjain (Siva) and Dvaravati (Krishna). Five hundred years have passed since such a primary centre has been destroyed.

Krishna's Udupi is geographically far removed from Rāma's Ayodhya. Still, the clarion call of 'open the locks of Ayodhya's Mandir' was a roar from Udupi. In the name of Rāma, Lord Krishna had sounded his Pāncajanya (the name of Lord Krishna's conch).

It was Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's third paryāya. Many patriotic leaders of Hindu dharma had gathered under the shade of rājāngaṇa. In this dharmic assembly, several topics were discussed. At the end, Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha described the ideals of Lord Rāma. He awakened their dormant devotion. He expressed disappointment that the nation had imprisoned *maryādā puruṣottama* Rāma. As tears welled up in the audience, a solemn dignified voice, as if ordained by Lord Krishna himself, had come forth from the Swamiji. "Unlock the doors; allow us to have darshan of Lord Rāma, else *we* will open the door; *we* will show you Rāma's strength". The audience was electrified. The whole assembly stood as one and applauded.

The sound of this applause reached as far as New Delhi. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi responded immediately. Police stations in the district of Ayodhya woke up. The District Magistrate enquired with the District Commissioner - 'will unlocking lead to any legal hassles? Will peace be disturbed?'. In one voice, the officers said there would be no problems.

With national leaders and other religious heads

The issue had been sorted out in a whiff. The country's citizens forgot themselves seeing the Ram Lalla (the Rāma idol at Ayodhya) at Rāma's birthplace. But where indeed was Ram Lalla? He was under the shade of minarets, symbols of Babar's barbarism, built on the destroyed towers of what used to be a grand temple complex!

Citizens of a proud country do not tolerate this. A Rāmaratha (chariot in the name of Rāma) was kept ready. A call was given for *kar seva* (hands-on service). Bricks were collected for construction of the temple. People marched towards Ayodhya.

Śrī Viśveśa tīrtha's declaration 'we are ready to go to Krishna's birthplace (meaning prison where Krishna was born) for the sake of Rāma's birthplace', inspired the people yet again. Śrī Viśveśa tīrtha was arrested in Uttar Pradesh. Along with him were the younger Pejāvara Swamiji Śrī Viśvaprasanna tīrtha, and Swamijis of Palimaru maṭha, Subramanya maṭha, Adamaru maṭha, Bhandarakeri maṭha, and Balegaru maṭha. The officer who arrived to arrest Śrī Viśveśa tīrtha bowed to him in reverence as soon as he saw the pontiff. He said "I am only a servant who follows the government order. I have been directed to arrest you". The Swamiji said "You may carry out your duty. Please make sure there is no obstacle to our daily *puja*". He was under house arrest at a home near the banks of the river. The police found it difficult to control the crowd that gathered everyday to watch Swamiji's *saṃsthāna pūje* (detailed puja conducted for the presiding deity and all associated idols). Even the police personnel joined the crowds in watching the *puja*, in receiving the holy water and *prasadam* and in listening to the Swamiji's discourses. The reason for tight security in such a pious ambience in Ayodhya was something no one understood. Meanwhile, bowing to another order, the police released Swamiji, who travelled to Ayodhya again. He was stopped and checked at some places and arrested again. The officers said "Give us in writing that you will not travel to Ayodhya. You can go anywhere else". The pontiff said "We need to go to Ayodhya for the darshan of Lord Rāma. We will not cause any harm to the law. We can give only this in writing."

December 6th, 1992. All the pontiffs have reached Ayodhya by foot, by private vehicles and sometimes by auto rickshaws. The call for *kar seva* had unified the country. People coming from all over the country viewed the Ram Lalla for the first time in their lives.

The moving masses resembled an ocean of black and saffron (due to the flags they carried). The chants of *Sriram Jairam* reached the skies. There was confluence of sounds from tāḻa (small round brass plates used to maintain time in music), taṃbūri (a musical instrument with four strings used for base pitch), and gejje (anklet with jingling bells). The ardent devotees who had come all the way from Kashmir and from Kanyakumari going through arduous journeys to see Lord Rāma in his birthplace could not tolerate the minarets on Rāma's destroyed abode. The barbarism of transgression started opening up in layers in people's minds. Unexpected things happened as things went out of control. At the end, it appeared as if the minarets never existed. Conches, bells, idols and other paraphernalia for worship appeared in their place.

An elderly person then handed over the idol of Ram Lalla to Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha. Tears of devotion flowed down his cheeks. This Ram Lalla had come to the darshan-seeking Swamiji in the same way that the boy Rāma came running to mother Kausalya's embrace. The hands of Swamiji that had worshipped Lord Rāma now embraced Ram Lalla with love and devotion, carrying him to the temple stage.

Bhajans from one side, chanting of mantras from another, and reading of *Hanumān Chalisa* from yet another. Some saw in the wiry skeletal pontiff, a Hanumān in a seer's form, who had seen Rāma and bowed to him (as in the Rāmāyaṇa epic). Some saw in him, mother Kausalya holding the infant Rāma and walking along his tiny footsteps. Ram Lalla was installed and there were tears of joy all around.

Within seconds after this, there was a bolt from the blue. The honourable Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao announced in the media that 'the government will construct a Mosque in the same location'.

The Swamiji became busy. He could not use the telephone as all communication lines were down. He travelled to a far off town from where he called P. V. R. K. Prasad, the Prime Minister's personal secretary, explained to him the possible disasters of constructing a Mosque. His message was - 'Do not test the patience of the Hindu community; this kind of political practice has led to the present situation, we should wake up at least now, please make the Prime Minister understand the pulse of the nation; I would like to meet him once'. He then spoke to several political leaders. It was eleven in the night by the time the announcement came that the government would do nothing at present. Only after this, the Swamiji conducted his usual rituals. On that day, one could see a new radiance on Rāma's idol during the *puja*.

It has been twenty eight years since this incident took place. The country's highest court has now provided justice to the nation. It has decreed that the disputed site indeed belongs to Ram Lalla.

As soon as this judgement was announced, the Swamiji had begun thinking 'my work is now over. My disciples will manage the future.'

A Tapasvi too has Obligations

(Tapasvi is a man who leads a life of contemplation and extreme self-denial for realising the ultimate truth and principles of being.) The Gita says 'A yogi is one who empathises with others' joys and sorrows as his own'. Vyasa has said 'if a learned man, in spite of seeing in front of him people in distress, fails to involve himself in bringing them relief, his *punya* (good karma) leaks away like water from a leaky pot'.

ब्राह्मणः समदृक् शान्तः दीनानां समुपेक्षकः ।
स्रवते ब्रह्म तस्यापि भिन्नभाण्डात् पयो यथा ।।
(भागवत - ६.१४-८२)

brāhmaṇaḥ samadṛk śāntaḥ dīnānāṃ samupekṣakaḥ |
sravate brahma tasyāpi bhinnabhāṇḍāt payo yathā ||
(Bhāgavata - 6.14.42)

These instructions by Lord Krishna and sage Vyasa were practised by Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha.

In 1967, a dire famine ravaged the state of Bihar. Thousands perished due to scarcity of food, medicine and clothing. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha moved from town to town on foot, collected funds for the affected and established a medical centre at Navada village in the district of Gaya. He made arrangements for supply of food and medicine to the surrounding villages by jeeps. A native had enquired "why are you, being from the state of Karnataka, so restless about the troubles in Bihar?" to which the Swamiji replied, "will not every organ of the body come to the aid of any part that is affected?".

A common person sets a limit to himself by saying 'only this circle of people are *mine*', but not the generous ones. As the Sanskrit saying goes, *udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭuṃbakam* (for the generously minded, the whole world is a family).

In 1986, when a famine-like situation occurred in Karnataka's Bagalkot, he arranged for the affected farmers to be provided with food and work. He also arranged for the desilting of the lake at Karadagi.

In 1978 he adopted the Hamsaladeevi village in Andhra Pradesh and built 150 houses for those affected by the fury of nature. In 1995 he handed over 60 houses to people affected by the earthquake in Bijapur district's Govindapura. 'When the world is in peril, it is an opportune time for the realisation of the Supreme. It is not a time for inaction or for accumulating bad karma. It is similar to the time of the solar and lunar eclipses (that are meant for noble and pious activities). This was his stand. In any case, where would he get the money to distribute without these activities?

The noble work of collecting money from the haves and distributing it to the have nots was being performed by Śrī Viśveśa

Tīrtha. This is why the wealthy generously contributed to his efforts. They had faith that the money would reach the intended beneficiaries without even a paisa going to waste.

Riches and Sages

A gṛhastha (a family man) and a sanyāsi are different in their calling in life. Śrī Madhvācārya, referring to the rules for a sanyāsi says *svīyavittena tu vinā sadā* (meaning a sanyāsi is forbidden to accumulate wealth for himself).

All the waters from rain ultimately join the ocean. If all the water were to keep flowing into the ocean, how will people on land and the forests survive? So, the Sun shines brightly over the oceans and extracts water in the form of vapour. He converts it to water-bearing clouds and makes them rain on the mountains. Because the sun collects the water and puts it back on earth, thus protecting it, he is also called *pātra* (a crucible or a vessel). The Sun doesn't consume the water for himself. He creates fertile land by pouring water where there is none.

It is believed that the sanyāsis and mendicants work like the sun who has descended to earth. *ādityā iva gāṃ gataḥ* (It is the duty of the sun god to enable movement from where there is some to where there is none). It is the same with the sanyāsis.

Another term for a sanyāsi is *bhikshu*. A similar sounding word in Kannada is *bhikshuka* meaning a beggar. But what an enormous difference between the two. A *bhikshu* begs; so also does a beggar. While the beggar begs to satisfy his hunger, the *bhikshu* does it to serve the society.

Donating and Getting others to Donate

Śrī Viśveśa tīrtha was skilled at seeking funds. He would say "If you can donate this much, a room in your name can be constructed at the choultry in Badari. When pilgrims from Karnataka go there, arrangements for food, and for conducting daily rituals are absent. Hence there is this plan for construction. You may please get contributions from your people too". On other occasions, he sought funds for 'Ananda Tīrtha Vidyalaya' at Pajaka, five crore rupees for a hospital project at Bengaluru and several others. He has built hundreds of organisations by going from home to home seeking funds. He has worked for the rejuvenation of more than two hundred organisations.

The respected Swamiji would not forget even a small act of charity. Such people were called to Udupi and honoured. When their families faced a crisis, he would hurry to their place and comfort them with compassionate words. When such people passed away, he would provide the relatives solace and recall every good deed of the person. He had an extraordinary memory and a sense of boundless gratefulness. He was born with this nature.

A school in Rāmakunja had to be constructed and the Paranti temple nearby had to be rejuvenated. These two activities were being performed by the local committee. One day the committee met the Swamiji and explained the difficulty it faced in collecting funds. It said that the shortage was a crore of rupees.

The Swamiji got down to work immediately. He made a few calls explaining the need for this activity, describing the present situation and seeking contributions. He gave instructions to a few disciples too. He gave away eight lakh rupees that had been collected for the purchase of a new vehicle for the maṭha staff and said "All of you have been working hard and with devotion. I am told that Narayana Bhat has not been home these last four days. It is very difficult to collect funds from the public. Conduct a campaign for the next fifteen days; go to as many towns as possible. You have the blessings of Lord Krishna and Śrī Mukhyaprāṇa (an epithet for Lord Hanumān).” Saying thus, he gave them holy *prasadam*. In that one hour, rupees twenty five lakhs was committed. In the next fifteen days, the committee, now smiling, met the seer again. It expressed confidence about completing the work undertaken. It prostrated before him saying his blessing was their only strength. The Swamiji said “What is my contribution? This is the result of your unflinching effort. These are some eminent moments of your lives.”

Some people give, but not make others give. Some people get others to give, but themselves don’t. One in a thousand may give and cause others also to give. But such a person proclaims “everything is because of me” and views the other person as despicable. A Sanskrit subhashita says the following.

दाता न दापयति दापयिता न दत्ते
  यो दानदापनपरो मधुरं न वक्ति ।
दानं च दापनमथो मधुरा च वाणी
  त्रीण्यप्यमूनि खलु सत्पुरुषे वसन्ति ।।

dātā na dāpayati dāpayitā na datte
  yo dānadāpanaparo madhuraṃ na vakti |
dānaṃ ca dāpanamatho madhurā ca vāṇī
  trīṇyapyamūni khalu satpuruṣe vasanti ||

A donor does not make others give donations. One who makes others donate himself does not donate. The one who donates and makes others donate too does not speak politely. Only a satpuruṣa (a pious man or a gentleman) has all three traits - donating, making others donate and speaking politely. This adage is a mirror to Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha’s personality. That is the life’s ideal for people like us.

Pāṭhadīkṣe - Commitment to Teaching

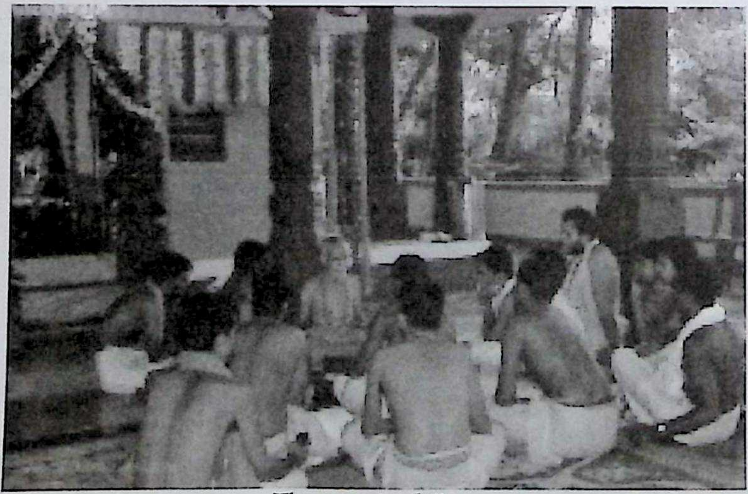
Bhishma was Shantanu’s son. He studied first under Brihaspatyacharya and then under Paraśurāmacharya for a total of

525 years. He was an unequalled scholar in śastra (weaponry) as much as in śāstra (sciences).

Bhishma was lying on the deathbed of arrows. He was awaiting his end. Lord Krishna came to him. He was accompanied by seers and sages. Krishna said 'Grandfather, please teach all your knowledge with Dharmaja in front of you'. He gave him some water to get some strength. Bhishma then transmitted his knowledge worth more than a thousand pages.

ग्रन्थ

Lord Krishna's stand was clear. This human body is not permanent. But the knowledge gained is permanent. Bhishma's knowledge should not be lost with his passing away. A dying person should share and thus preserve his knowledge and then die. Krishna too, before passing to the other world, called Udhdhava and gave him the river of knowledge. That is what we call 'Udhdhavageethe' of Bhagavata.



The committed Guru

A learned person should be like a pregnant woman about to give birth as per a Sanskrit saying - *garbha iva saṃbhṛto garbhiṇībhiḥ*. Just as a pregnant woman looks forward to the supreme joy of looking at the soon-to-be-born child's beauty, a learned man fills his disciples with knowledge and looks forward to enjoying hearing it back from them. The revered Swamiji used to study scholarly books on Vedanta everyday. He might give up eating, but not his daily study. The saying सुधाग्रन्थरसज्ञानामाहारोपि न रोचते (*sudhā grantharasajñānāmāhāropi na rocate*) - for those who enjoy the taste of the book *Sudha*, regular food is distasteful has come into being from this.

Starting from Udupi in the afternoon, it was eleven in the night when Swamiji reached Belgaum. He was accompanied by forty students. They were so tired that they were in no mood even to eat. The teacher called the students. He regaled them with a funny incident. In this enjoyable ambience, their sleep slipped away. The students were joyous. The Swamiji then said "shall I do some teaching now? The food preparation will take a half hour more anyway!". So in the dead of night, a lesson for 45 minutes. In the middle he stopped and left for a shower. While the students were eating, the teacher was still busy with his daily rituals. After the students went to sleep, the Swamiji rested only after 1 AM. Again he woke up at sunrise, woke up the students too and began teaching lessons.

Manusmriti says -

उत्तिष्ठेत् प्रथमं चास्य चरमं चैव संविशेत् (मनु २.१९४)
uttiṣṭhet prathamaṃ cāsya caramaṃ caiva saṃviśet (manu 2.194).
(one who resides with the teacher should sleep after the teacher has slept and wake up before him).

But with the Swamiji, it is reversed. Of course, several devoted students who followed this saying of sage Manu were also with the Swamiji.

On the day of graduation of his students who completed the Sudhamangala, the emphatic message from the Swamiji was "Śrī Vidyāmānya taught me and made me promise that I will study and teach regularly. My message to you is the same. Vow to study and teach. Have a job for the sake of this earthly life. However, everyone, according to one's strengths, should teach at least one among Sanskrit stotras, sukta, vedanta, tarka etc. That is your *gurudakṣhiṇe* (fees offered to the teacher at the end of education) to me. As the Sanskrit phrase says *'dakṣiṇā jñānasaṃdeśaḥ'* (Spreading knowledge is the true fees).

No Substitute for a Mother

The dharma of this land of India is Hindu dharma. This word 'Hindu dharma' is a modern word. In reality it is 'Sanatana Dharma'. Every person should have loyalty to his dharma and tolerance of other dharmas. It is not right to give up one's dharma and accept another. 'Conversion' is a social disease. It gives rise to a range of problems from family to politics. Moreover, the invasive nature of religious fanaticism gives rise to intolerance in society. Hence Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha vehemently criticised and protested against conversion.

He would question those converted - "A person can select a wife by choice. If he feels she is unwanted, It may even be possible to forsake her. But can he do this with his mother? Saying she is not lovely and she is ugly, is it possible to get a new mother? Our birth decides our mother. We have to accept her as our mother and perform our duties and serve her as children.

We need to follow the same rule in the matter of dharma. Our dharma is decided at birth. It is ready to receive our services. Nobody should attempt to change it. We have to faithfully follow the dharma that has been bestowed upon us. Pejāvara Swamiji's clear stand was

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ।

svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ

(it is better to die in your own dharma than
live in fear in another).

On one occasion, addressing the Hindu Mahasabha, the Swamiji said "This disease called *conversion* has struck our religion like a cancer. If we allow this to grow, the Hindu religion will have no base. India is the only base for this dharma. Other religions have many other countries. In order to save our sanatana dharma, Indians have to forget differences of caste, creed and religion and unify as one. If the fort is breached, how will the houses inside be protected?. The Hindu dharma is like a fort. All the communities in it are like the houses protected by the fort. All of you should unite and avoid this disaster of conversion".

The Swamiji stepped into the colony of dalits. He went from lane to lane. He empathised with their difficulties. Those who had converted started coming back into the Hindu fold. '*Ghar Wapsi*' (returning home) started. The evil scheme to make India a Christian country within forty years was uprooted. Among the questions asked to the students in a missionary school in Gujarat, was this one - 'What do you know about Karnataka's Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha Swamiji?'

Why are conversions taking place? When this question is asked we offer several reasons. Among them are - the financial assistance being given to the missionaries by the western countries, a blind belief that converting a person to one's own religion will have special rewards in heaven, vote bank politics, instigation by our country's intellectuals after receiving donations from foreign governments, accusations about our own dharma - and so on and so forth.

But Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha says this has happened due to our mistakes. We have not spread our dharma in a proper way. We are still denying entry to some people into temples. They have no knowledge of the ideals of Rāma-Krishna-Shiva-Devi etc. If one does not understand the value, how will he develop devotion? Other religions are not so. They go to remote villages and build churches and mosques. They have opened schools and hospitals. They are going to every dalit's house, teaching alphabets, offering medicines and handing over pamphlets of their religion. When we are unable to provide opportunities to our own people in our religion and unable to provide accessible free education and health care, what else should they do? None of these people (those who converted) are attracted by the other religion per se. They were attracted by the beneficence of those religions. We should think seriously about this and become active.

This is the difference between commoners and great souls. For the ills in their society, common people blame another society. They see the dirt under the other person's foot, but cannot see the dead elephant under their own. That is why they take the path of conflict. Great souls are not like that. They contemplate. They prefer to correct their own blemishes first.

It is the Swamiji's opinion that people who have gone out of our dharma and the atheists are not like the desert sand. They are more like the sands on the banks of the river Ganga. No matter how much you dig, you cannot find water in the desert. But if you even just scoop some sand from the banks of Ganga, you can find tasty water. In the same way, the river of dharma and devotion flows in the minds of our atheists. But the mind has been enveloped by ignorance. It is our responsibility to set this right. Can we expect others to do this for us? Can we even expect such a situation?

Our people who have been influenced by other religions should be duly made to understand our dharma. People of other religions are like the sun's heat. People influenced by these religions are like sand heated by the sun. It is possible to bear the sun's heat. But it is not possible to walk in the sand heated by the sun. The preachers of other religions are not dangerous. It is our own people, now converted, who are dangerous. People supporting jihad and love jihad today are basically our own. They are those who were either influenced or tortured by these other religions in the past.

With these thoughts of the Swamiji as guiding principles, our youth community stepped into the arena. In Tamil Nadu, a whole village had been converted. Within a few days, the temples in the village were cleaned and the crosses that had entered the temples disappeared. Bhajans on Rāma and Krishna could be now heard.

Dharma is sustained by devotion; by prosperous thoughts; by propagation through distraction-free discourses by community leaders that enhances emotional connection. That is why Śrī Madhvācārya instructed the sanyāsis - "viṣṇoḥ sarvottamatvaṃ ca sarvadā pratipādaya - propagate everywhere that God is supreme. Convince them about God's supremacy by placing before them stories from Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Bhagavata etc."

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's thinking was on these lines - Our discourses should touch people of all communities. The charm of dharma should manifest through these discourses and inspire good conduct. It is not that we don't need debates, discussions and criticisms between different philosophies like dvaita - advaita (dvaita - the school of philosophy enunciated predominantly by Madhvācārya that God is independent and everything else dependent on him; advaita - the school of philosophy enunciated by Shankaracharya that the soul ultimately realises the brahman and merges with it), or budhdha - mimamsaka. In fact all the three principal proponents feel they are essential, but these are discussions among the experts. We should not refute our own religion in public and bring it down. We should not force feed. But we have to work against anti-traditional forces that are working towards breaking the society through false practices.

Do Not Uproot Tradition

The head of an organisation once told the Swamiji, "The caste system is the bane of our religion. You must root it out just as Śrī Basavanna did." Swamiji replied, "Did Basavanna root out the caste system? No, he just created one more."

The *varna* system is one facet of our ancient sanatana dharma. What is ancient cannot be uprooted. We should correct its shortcomings and live with mutual respect.

A *vokkaliga* must practise his dharma with devotion. A brahmin should not give up his rituals either. Cobblers, blacksmiths and others must also follow the practices of their varna. But we should all be united in that we all belong to the same religion that believes in Rāma-Shiva-Devi. We should celebrate fairs and festivals as one. Unity in diversity is the characteristic of our religion. We should shift our attention towards character and not towards blemishes.

Let us consider an incident attributed to the Mahābhārata. Yudhishtira and Duryodhana are sitting facing each other in the assembly. Vidura had an urge to test their personality. Addressing Yudhishtira, he said "name a dharmik (a person who follows dharma) man in this assembly". Yudhishtira looked around and thought 'Dharmaraya is in front of me, but what of his dharma? Too much adherence to dharma is a type of adharma'. He looked at Bhishma and thought 'in order to make sure his father can marry, he remained a bachelor - what kind of dharma is that?'. Then he looked at Drona, Karna and Dushasana. He could think of a defect in each. Finally he was unable to name any person as *dharmik*.

Vidura then asked the same question to Yudhishtira. Duryodhana was sitting in front of him. Yudhishtira thought, 'why not this person! Is not perseverance (for which Duryodhana was known) not one of the dharmas of a kshatriya?'. Thinking thus, he named Duryodhana a *dharmik*.

This incident is an interpolation that is not in the original Mahābhārata. However it illustrates why Yudhishtira had no enemies. It shows the primary reason why he was known as Dharmaraja (king of righteous conduct) and why Duryodhana was considered an evil person.

We too should not view our religion through the eyes of Duryodhana. Such eyes view even a noble character as an evil one. The caste system may have its shortcomings. But attention should be given to the good points in the system and minor defects should be tolerated. Is it possible to give up cooking just because the hearth produces smoke?

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha's thinking was of this 'enemy-less' type. Without giving up even a little bit of his own dharma, he lived harmoniously with people of other castes and religions. He would advise others to follow their dharma and did not force his on them. In the same vein, he never agreed about others forcing their dharma on him.

Let *Ganga* Flow Unabated

Between Science and Philosophy, which is superior? Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha says "Scientists are like horses. Philosophy is like its reins. A horse without reins is dangerous."

Science makes inventions that make human life easier. Philosophy helps control man's pursuit of materialism. In matters of a country's security and peaceful co-existence, religion and philosophy have a higher importance than law and judiciary. Science should not attack religion. When that happens, the country moves toward decline. The environment, mountains, forests and rivers start deteriorating.

Rivers are the arteries of the nation. Ganga and Yamuna rivers are like the arteries and veins of our country.

A body is alive because of its blood vessels. The food is supplied through the blood vessels. Even breathing is because of the blood vessels. Blood vessels are needed for the constant flow of blood and its purification. If the blood vessels dry up, the body becomes a corpse. Similar is the situation for the country when the rivers dry up.

Rivers are needed for growing crops. They are also a source of drinking water. They are needed for purification and for mental peace. A habitat of rivers is necessary for the rishis to conduct their tapas. This streak of water that we call a river is the lifeline for this earth. And mountains are the sources of rivers.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha used to love rivers and mountains. Earlier when the mountains at Pajaka were ravaged by mining activity, he took to the streets in protest to create awareness. He conveyed his apprehension to the government and appealed for giving up its mega plans in the western ghats citing the destructive impact it will cause to nature. His attention later turned to the sacred river Ganga.

There is a school in Bangalore's Girinagar called 'Purnapramati'. It took shape based on Śrī Pejāvara pontiff's love of nature and his ideals of loyalty to his religion. Swamiji himself inaugurated this school and guided it. Four youngsters have been working committedly to develop it. They are making students understand and value ancient Indian traditions as well as providing modern education. They are strengthening the old roots with new sprouts. It believes that in tradition lies the seed of protection.The students in this school grow plants and trees. They clean up by collecting waste plastic. They go to the source of the polluted Vrishabhavati and Arkavathi rivers and try to rejuvenate them. They try to create awareness on not using plastic. Coming to know about this school, Gangatapasvi Sanandaswaroopa Swamiji visited Purnapramati. He met Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha too.

Śrī J. D. Agarwal, a scientist who worked as a Dean at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, was so disgusted seeing the ravage wrought on the Ganga, that he became a sanyāsi committed for serving the river Ganga.

The Ganga is not just a river. It is a manifestation of God's power. It is a major symbol of this country's identity. Bhagīratha is our ancestor. He dedicated his whole life to Ganga and has given us this wealth that is the deluge of Ganga. It is our duty to maintain it. The national flag is an external symbol while the Ganga is our inner consciousness. When we are unable to tolerate a filthy flag, how can we tolerate the insult heaped on Ganga which is the main artery and lifeline of this *Bharatmata*? Pejāvara Swamiji's opinion synchronised with that of Sananda Swamiji.

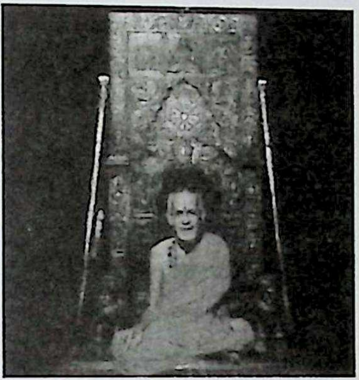
In just forty years, river Ganga's flow has come down by a quarter. From urban waste to sewage from the cities to medical waste from the hospitals, everything gets dumped into the Ganga. Dams are being built to stop flood waters of Ganga; monstrous machines are breaking open the Himalayas near Gangotri, the birthplace of Ganga; tunnels have been bored in mountains for Ganga's flow for generating electricity resulting in empty river basins over fifteen miles. It feels as if mother Ganga is lamenting in front of her devotees - 'oh, why did Bhagīratha descend me into this land of unkind people?'

Pejāvara Swamiji was awestruck when he came to know that the government had given permission for 152 new projects that obstruct the flow of Alakananda and Bhagirathi (both tributaries of river Ganga). He got goosebumps when he heard details about Sananda Swami's *tapas* and fasting *satyagraha*. He immediately set off to the north and personally witnessed the condition of the river. In some places along its path, it stood still at dams, at others it was a flowing reddish soiled stream, and at others, a skeletal impoverished stream. Witnessing this condition of the holy Ganga brought tears to the eyes of the Swamiji. He went to New Delhi and met the Prime Minister. He explained to him the importance of an unabated Ganga. He returned only after getting an assurance that the permits already given for projects would be re-examined and that no further projects would be permitted.

The Swamiji used to say - "The river basin until Haridwar is in the Himalayas. All that is sacred land. Allow Ganga to flow in this part unhindered. Do not plan any dam or reservoir projects that stop its flow. Give attention to its cleanliness and ensure it is not polluted upstream or downstream. Do not make her angry. She is a peaceful river. If our misbehaviour becomes excessive, she may breach her banks. She has the immense capacity to destroy the whole of Brahmavarta (the land mass between the river Indus and Brahmaputra referred to in vedic texts)."

Unparalleled Paryāya

Śrī Vadiraja Tīrtha who came in the lineage of Śrī Madhvācārya extended the system of puja for Udupi Krishna from two months to two years (This two-year period is known as paryāya and is conducted in turns by the pontiffs of the eight maṭhas). Conducting his first two-year paryāya at the age of fifty, Vadiraja Tīrtha conducted it again three more times in person. During the fifth turn, he stayed at Sonda and conducted the paryāya through his disciple and was hailed as yatikulachakravarti (the emperor among pontiffs).



During Paryaya

Four hundred years after this, a similar good fortune came Pejāvara Swamiji's way. Agreeing to the pressure from his disciple and successor Śrī Vishvaprasanna Tīrtha and other devotees, he agreed to ascend the paryāyapeetha (the symbolic seat of the pontiff during the paryāya) for the fifth time. He achieved the distinction of 'yatikulachakravarti'. He renovated the Krishna temple. He got the eight pontiffs together and conducted *brahma kalasha abhisheka*' for Śrīkrishna. The Madhvangana was constructed above the rājāngaṇa during this time. Unprecedented encouragement was given to education and arts including folk arts. rājāngaṇa was witness to 860 cultural programs during the paryāya that lasted 731 days. And no less were the discourses and lectures on various topics.

'Final' Caution

It is a rare fortune to be born a human. This god given body must be usefully utilised. But one should never be under the illusion that this is immortal. We see how even the supreme God who came down to earth, played the drama of ending his body in Krishnavatara. The body is a material sheath (that covers the soul). The material itself is not permanent, so what of the body? Padmapurana says the following.

यत् प्रातः संस्कृतं चान्नं सायं तच्च विनश्यति ।
तदीयरससम्पुष्टे काये का नाम नित्यता ? ।।

yat prātaḥ saṃskṛtaṃ cānnaṃ sāyaṃ tacca vinaśyati |
tadīyarasasaṃpuṣṭe kāye kā nāma nityatā? ||

> *(Even food prepared with preservatives rots after some time. How is it possible for this human body maintained by impermanent things to become immortal?)*

The end is already decided when one is born. Commoners die fearing death, while the 'aware', after a certain stage of achievement, actually expect and welcome it. They await death like they make preparations and await a guest who is expected to turn up the next day.

Death is a type of test. A student who has studied well is in anticipation of the question paper on the day of the examination. He is anxiously awaiting it. But students who have wasted their time are scared of the question paper. The very thought is scary. For a person who has lived life honestly, death is also very pleasing.

One should desire one's own death, but not others. One's life should not be a tragedy where others say 'if only he were dead'. 'Such people should live a hundred years' should be the refrain not just from relatives and friends. One should lead life such that the whole society wishes so.

Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha used to speak about his death with an open mind. He had the equanimity to treat life and death as natural events. He had shown his disciples the spot where he wanted to be interred and said 'it would please me if I am buried here'.

Pejāvara Swamiji had completed 89 and was in his 90th year. He was still healthy and strong. He had a smile on his lips and joy in his mind. He had decided life was 'enough'.

He rushed to Tirupati to have the darshan of Lord Venkateshwara. Next morning he reached Udupi and worshipped Lord Krishna. Later that afternoon he participated in the school anniversary function at his birthplace Rāmakuṃja, spoke consoling words and said his goodbyes. In the evening he spoke for half an hour at Udupi's rājāngaṇa giving a rousing speech. He performed the night puja. Just as he had done everyday of his life, he did not waste a minute of his day and was a fountain of enthusiasm. He then retired for the day.

People all over the country offered oblations, prayed and worshipped wishing that the Swamiji would wake up from the slumber. Millions of prayers failed in front of the Swamiji who had decided it was enough.

Today he is in a sitting posture at Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha, the joyous abode of veda and vedanta, and watching over it. He is bestowing his blessings and fulfilling the desires of his devotees. He is keeping up his fitting title of 'Viśveśa Tīrtha'.

Epilogue

There is an opinion that one should not attempt to write about a vast subject, because it is not possible to complete it. If one writes only a little bit, it becomes blasphemous.

And here is a different opinion - To detail each characteristic of a great person is a pious activity. It is a social service to demonstrate ideals. Publicise one out of a hundred, if not ten. Otherwise, the god-given speech is an utter waste. The ability to write is fruitless.

वाग्जन्मवैफल्यमसह्यशल्यं
गुणाद्भुते वस्तुनि मौनिता चेत्

vāgjanmavaiphalyamasahyaśalyaṃ
guṇādbhute vastuni maunitā cet

This book should be seen in the background of the second of these opinions.

In recent times, writing is becoming a mirage. There are a lot of elders who inspire and several disciples who are wary that nothing is being written. There is no dearth of compelling friends. My classmate and friend Nagarajanna's love-filled command and the strength of his cooperation is behind as well as in the forefront of this book.

A person's lifestyle, career or position is shaped by his family and his community members. He may be a labourer, a teacher, a priest or a doctor. He may even be the pontiff of a maṭha. A great soul is one who, being in the position he is, accomplishes maximum possible service without crossing boundaries of that position. Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha was a role model who demonstrated how much a Madhva pontiff can achieve within his boundaries. His disciple Śrī Vishvaprasanna Tīrtha, the present pontiff of Pejāvara maṭha, is in the same mould. He is a ray of hope for the Hindu society of a resplendent India. When requested for a word of blessing for this book, he immediately perused the book and provided a foreword that binds this book.

My daughter Susmita has translated Vidwan Śrī Venkatesha Kulkarni's 'Śrī Viśveśa Vijaya' in champu style into lovely Kannada and rendered her service to the guru (by storing it in her cabinet!). I have referred to it for the authenticity and background of events quoted in this book.

Praising a teacher should culminate in praising God. Swamiji's personal Gods were Lord Krishna and Lord Rāma. In the last section of the book, I have included at the end of the original Kannada version of this book, a poem that tells the story of Lord Rāma. As desired by a well-wisher earlier, I had translated the Sanskrit नामरामायण (*nāmarāmāyaṇa*) that starts with शुद्धब्रह्मपरात्परराम (*śudhdhabrahmaparātpararāma*) into Kannada in the same style as '*siriramaṇa tava caraṇa*'. It includes my son Sushrutha's handiwork also. For singers desirous of contemplating further on this holy story of Lord Rāma, the poem has been included as an appendix at the end of the original Kannada version of the book.

The most revered Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha, during his fifth paryāya, composed five poems on Lord Krishna while sitting on the sacred Sarvajnapeeta (the holy seat which was first adorned by Śrī Madhvācārya in the thirteenth century used as the seat of the paryāya pontiff). This *śrīkṛṣṇastutipancakaṃ* (group of five poems) which were composed impromptu is considered by devotees as having been uttered by or made to utter by Śrī Madhvācārya from his Sarvajnapeetha. These poems have been included at the end of the book..

What is written here is only a drop in the ocean of the life story of my guru. नभः पतंत्यात्मसमं पतत्रिणः (*nabhaḥ pataṃtyātmasamaṃ patatriṇaḥ* - The flight of birds in the sky is limited by their own strength). Similarly, my version of his life is limited by my own understanding.

Affectionate salutations to the hearty readers who enjoy this book, hopefully without abandoning it midway.

Appendix 1 :
ŚRĪKṚṢṆASTUTIPAṆCAKAM

श्रीकृष्णस्तुतिपञ्चकम्

दुर्वारदेवारिनिकायकालं
  संसारसिन्धोरपरं च कूलम् ।
कृष्णाप्रदत्ताक्षयसन्दुकूलं
  भवार्णवस्योत्तरणानुकूलम् ।।

durvāradevārinikāyakālaṃ
  saṃsārasiṃdhoraparaṃ ca kūlam |
kṛṣṇāpradattākṣayasandukūlaṃ
  bhavārṇavasyottaraṇānukūlam || 1 ||

तमालनीलं धृतहेममालं
  विश्वस्य मूलं विविधोरुलीलम् ।
भैष्मीविलोलं भुवनैकपालं
  भक्तालवालं प्रणमामि बालम् ।। २ ।।

tamālanīlaṃ dhṛtahemamālaṃ
  viśvasya mūlaṃ vividhorulīlam |
bhaiṣmīvilolaṃ bhuvanaikapālaṃ
  bhaktālavālaṃ praṇamāmi bālam || 2 ||

उलूखलं दामवरेण बद्धं
  कर्षन् भवान् भूमिरुहौ न्यपातयत् ।
निबध्य पाशेन कलिं खलं हरे
  विभिन्द्यविद्याद्वयमद्य सद्यः ।।

ulūkhalaṃ dāmavareṇa badhdhaṃ
  karṣan bhavān bhūmiruhau nyapātayat |
nibadhya pāśena kaliṃ khalaṃ hare
  vibhindyavidyādvayamadya sadyaḥ || 3 ||

अपारे क्षीरोदे पृथुमथनसंसाधितसुधां
हरिर्नैवागृह्णात् सुरसुमथितां किन्तु सुगवाम् ।
पयः पायंपायं रुचिरनवनीतं च समदन्
प्रपेदे नो तृप्तिं बत भगवतः पश्यत कृपाम् ।। ४ ।।

apāre kṣīrode pṛthumathanasaṃsādhitasudhāṃ
harirnaivāgṛhṇāt surasumathitāṃ kiṃtu sugavām |
payaḥ pāyaṃpāyaṃ ruciranavanītaṃ ca samadan
prapede no tṛptiṃ bata bhagavataḥ paśyata kṛpām || 4 ||

नमामि कृष्णं प्रविलुप्ततृष्णं
स्मरामि बालं मनसा सदालम् ।
भजामि देवं दुरितौघदावं
दयाभिरामं दयितं निकामम् ।। ५ ।।

namāmi kṛṣṇaṃ praviluptatṛṣṇaṃ
smarāmi bālaṃ manasā sadālam |
bhajāmi devaṃ duritaughadāvaṃ
dayābhirāmaṃ dayitaṃ nikāmam || 5 ||

पञ्चमे स्वीयपर्यायकृष्णसेवामहोत्सवे ।
विश्वेशतीर्थयतिना रचितं पद्यपञ्चकम् ।। ६ ।।

paṇcame svīyaparyāyakṛṣṇasevāmahotsave |
viśveśatīrthayatinā racitaṃ padyapañcakam || 6 ||

।। इति यतिकुलचक्रवर्ति श्रीविश्वेशयतिविरचितम् श्रीकृष्णस्तुतिपञ्चकम् ।।

|| iti yatikulacakravarti śrīviśveśayativiracitam
śrīkṛṣṇastutipañcakam ||

Appendix 2 :

A Short Guide to IAST Symbols

Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST
अ	a	उ	u	ए	e	अं	aṃ
आ	ā	ऊ	ū	ऐ	ai	अः	aḥ
इ	i	ऋ	ṛ	ओ	o		
ई	ī	ॠ	ṝ	औ	au		

Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST
क	ka	च	ca	ट	ṭa	त	ta
ख	kha	छ	cha	ठ	ṭha	थ	tha
ग	ga	ज	ja	ड	ḍa	द	da
घ	gha	झ	jha	ढ	ḍha	ध	dha
ङ	ṅ	ञ	ń	ण	ṇa	न	na

Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST	Devanagari	IAST
प	pa	य	ya	ष	ṣa	ज्ञ	jńa
फ	pha	र	ra	स	sa		
ब	ba	ल	la	ह	ha		
भ	bha	व	va	ळ	ḻa		
म	ma	श	śa	क्ष	kṣa		

Guruvāṇi

Devotion to God should be accompanied by devotion to the country. To the saying mātṛ devo bhava (Mother is God) let us add rāṣṭra devo bhava (Country is God). Dharma can sustain only when land and water resources are sustained.

A sanyāsi in a society should be like a fish in water. Fish keeps the water clean. Water keeps the fish alive. Guidance by the sanyāsi should help keep the society clean and the society should sustain the sanyāsi.